

Salif Keita



The Mansa Of Mali . . . A Retrospective



1. Sina 4.45
Produced by Ibrahima Sylla

2. Mandjou 12.42
Produced by Salif Keita

3. Nyanafin 5.40
Produced by Joe Zawinul

4. Ignadjidje 6.04
Produced by Salif Keita

5. Nou Pas Bouger 7.14
Produced by Francois Breant

6. Djembe 5.03
Produced by Salif Keita

7. Souareba 4.39
Produced by Ibrahima Sylla

8. Tenin 6.13
Produced by Francois Breant

9. Sanni Kegnaiba 7.44
Produced by Ibrahima Sylla

10. Dalimansa 4.51
Produced by Salif Keita

Compiled by D.A. 'Jumbo' Vanreenen

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1. Sina 4.45

Produced by Ibrahima Sylla ©1987 Island Records Ltd. Taken from the Album SORO

2. Mandjou 12.42

Produced by Salif Keita ©1978 Salif Keita, licensed to Island Records Ltd. Taken from the Album MANDJOU

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Produced by Joe Zawinul ©1991 Island Records Ltd. Taken from the Album AMEN

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Compiled by D.A. 'Jumbo' Vanrenen

The following albums are available on Mango Cassette and CD:

SORO (162-539 808)

KŌ-YÁN (162-539 836)

AMEN (162-539 910)

"It's like this guy walking up a mountain to find out where he's coming from in jazz music and all of a sudden he meets a guy who can show him the short cut. Salif opened my eyes to another way, an easier way to get there." So said saxophonist **Courtney Pine** after a musical encounter with the golden voice of Mali, **Salif Keita**.

For Courtney, West London born and bred, his roots in Jamaica, a meeting with Salif was akin to a meeting with a spiritual and cultural force whose roots can be traced back to Soundjata Keita, a Warrior King who founded the Mali Empire in 1240. However, **Salif Keita's** story is no ordinary one. Being born albino – a sign of bad luck – into a noble family resulted in his being shunned by both his family and community. Poor eyesight and a lack of financial support thwarted a career in teaching, but his childhood encounters with the griots, who would arrive at his house to sing his family's praises, instilled a deep feeling for the music and triggered the option of an alternative, if problematic, career.

The young Salif began to regularly trek the 25 dusty kilometres from his native Djoliba to Bamako, Mali's capital, where he would sing in the markets. He lived on charity. Unfortunately, when his father discovered how his son made a living he refused to speak to him for the next six years. Life was tough. Moving to Bamako, the singer struggled to survive, but his luck changed when spotted singing in a nightclub. He was offered a job with the legendary, Government-sponsored **Rail Band** who were resident in the principle hotel of the railway station in Bamako. It was there he met guitarist **Kante Manfila**, with whom he still plays today, and became immersed in developing modern, electric, Malian music which was, at that time, deeply influenced by Cuban music. The singer worked six nights a week, with Wednesdays off, for the next three years. According to the journalist Helene Lee, one attempt to prise Salif away from the Rail Band was frustrated when the management offered the singer a Mobilette (moped) to stay. But in 1973 both Kante Manfila and Salif left to join **Les Ambassadeurs**. Based in a local motel, the band drew together local musicians and others from neighbouring countries and although they played 'international' music for tourists and business people they were the vanguard of modern Malian music. Of the five albums they made '**Mandjou**' – an epic poem dedicated to the Mandingo people and Guinea's President Sekou Toure continues to burn bright as a classic of modern African music.

Recorded in 1978 under Hi-tech conditions in Abidjan on the Ivory Coast, '**Mandjou**' with its delicate electric guitars, organ and sweet sax, signposted the way forward. A journey to New York with several other Ambassadeurs in 1980 resulted in another album, but it was four years later, after the Angouleme Festival, that Salif made the crucial move of leaving Mali to settle in Montreuil, a suburb of Paris with a large Malian community.

The musical melting pot of Paris with its African, Arab, Antillean and Haitian communities was the right ambience for Salif's music to flower. He confirmed his place among the greats of modern African music when **Manu Dibango** invited him to join **King Sunny Ade**, **Yousou N'Dour** and **Mory Kante** amongst other of the African 'Live Aid' record '**Tam Tam Pour L'Ethiopie**'. Salif's contribution was stunning. However, it was his groundbreaking debut LP, '**Soro**', produced by the influential Paris-based **Ibrahim Syllart** that open the way to an international reputation.

Access to a 48-track studio gave him the sound he was searching for and made the music accessible to a western audience. '**Soro**' introduced electric drums and synths and with the assistance of arrangements by **François Breant** and **Jean Phillippe Rykiel**, the traditional spirit was neither eclipsed nor lost. Salif's sources of inspiration remained the same: everyday life, with its trials, tribulations and lessons. Religion only became a source when his Islamic values coincided with Christian ones. A sense of space and spontaneity leapt from the grooves of '**Soro**' and the album launched Salif on a sell-out European tour. He appeared at the 70th birthday celebrations of Nelson Mandela at Wembley and in April 1989 released '**Kō-Yàn**' (which translates as "what's going on"), for the **Mango** label. The album took Salif further along that path of fusing contemporary technology and the Malian musical tradition.

Salif Keita's next project was to produce and present the magical '**Balendala Djobe**' from Malian singer **Sanougue Kouyate**, released on Mango. Meanwhile, rumours that Quincy Jones would be taking the production seat on the second Mango LP were only quashed when former **Miles Davis** keyboard player and mastermind behind **Weather Report**, **Joe Zawinul**, joined Salif in Studio Davout in Paris. According to Jumbo Vanrenen, the album's executive producer, Salif wanted "the best keyboard producer", and on the basis of listening to some Weather Report albums Zawinul was approached. As he had never produced any music other than his own he was initially reticent, but as it was his first Zawinul "was well into it and wanted to get it right".

Salif gathered around him a characteristically Parisian posse of musicians including Cameroonian **Etienne M'Bappe**, bassist with Ultramarine (the Antillean Weather Report); the acclaimed Ivory Coast drummer, **Paco Sery**; close collaborators – arranger and keyboard player **Cheik Tidiane Seck**, balafon player **Keletigui Diabate** and guitarist **Kante Manfila**; plus a five-piece choir featuring **Djanka Diabate**, **Djene Doumbouya** and **Nayanka Bell**.

Once in the can, the album was airlifted to the desert region of LA for the final mix. Saxophonist **Wayne Shorter** was added to two tracks **Carlos Santana** to three, and brilliant percussionist **Bill Summers** was added to most. Jumbo Vanrenen had to marvel at Zawinul at work, filling all 48 tracks on the mixing board, consistently pushing the groove of each song by adding percussion or fleeting melodies on synthesiser, and yet the more info he seemed to amass the simpler the music sounded.

Entitled '**Amen**', the album addresses contemporary issues. Despite being warned about meddling in political issues in his native Mali, the question of democracy at home and in the Ivory Coast feature in two songs. With the advent of democracy in Benin and the overthrow of Moussa Traore in Mali, his concern is fortunately being mirrored by change. It's a modern, all-enveloping set that spans the ancient to the future and, above all, is a radical meeting of musical minds.

Paul Bradshaw
Straight No Chaser

And now **Mango Records** would like to present **The Mansa of Mali...A Retrospective**



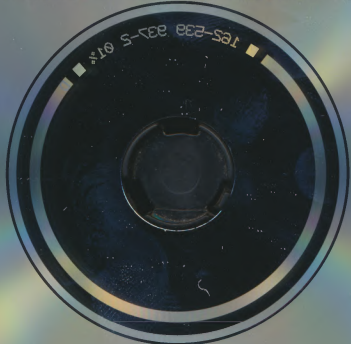


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SALIF KEITA

'THE MANSA OF MALI... A RETROSPECTIVE'



COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

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Sina Mandjou Nyanafin Ignadjidje
Nou Pas Bouger Djembe Souareba Tenin
Sanni Kegniba Dalimansa

Compiled by D.A. 'Jumbo' Vantrenen

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